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Hitler's Struggle and Plato's State:
A Study of the Ideological Structure of the National Socialist Freedom Movement

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Preliminary Remarks

The following lines are not intended to relegate matters that are by no means theoretical in nature to the realm of discussion; rather, they aim to help strengthen the confidence—not only of the hopeful and enthusiastic, but also of the thoughtful person—in the current state of public affairs, whose independent, patriotic activity now continues unabated in all circles and regions of learning.

I.

"All those who either live the new in a creative and productive way themselves, or—if this has not been granted to them—at least resolutely cast aside the trivial and stand alert to see whether the flow of original life will seize them somewhere; or, if they have not yet reached that point, at least sense freedom and do not hate it or shrink from it, but love it: all of these are original human beings, and when viewed as a people, they are a primordial people, the people pure and simple—they are Germans."

- Fichte

In his two-volume book[1], which serves as a guide for the following account of National Socialism, Hitler himself expresses an undisguised distrust of the revelatory power of the written word (see, for example, the preface and pg. 116): when he speaks of the art of reading, he does not intend to explain "letter by letter," but rather relies on a proper "feeling" that draws attention to the essential features necessary for the construction of a "worldview", and guides "the meaningful integration into the image that has always existed in some form" (pg. 37)[2] - thus, even if National Socialism appears to be the exclusive creation of Adolf Hitler, and his book must consequently be regarded as the ideologically authoritative testimony of the movement[3], one cannot deny that it seems dangerous to cite this book as literary "evidence" in the customary sense.
On the other hand, one can even less admit that an intellectual engagement with this book would be superfluous, or even unnecessary under the prevailing circumstances, for certainly, in keeping with the primarily practical issues of the young movement—which naturally take center stage—Hitler's book initially presents itself more as an agitational pamphlet, dealing mostly with real problems of politics and history, than as an ideological exposition of the National Socialist worldview.
What matters to him is decisive action - thus, in the interest of its impact and the unity of its forward momentum, all theoretical "ramblings" and "armchair theorizing" must take a back seat, and this practical orientation of the movement must not be overlooked.

It is this practicality that inevitably creates the impression of transience and ephemerality, which leads many to believe they are exempt from serious reflection; secondly, as a result of this, many things do indeed happen "for the moment," which find their justification not (at least not primarily) in premises of ideological commitment, but rather in existential commitment.
Such things, too, naturally stand in the way—wrongly—of the will to ideological reflection - thus, in what follows, we have abstracted from all these temporal matters—in short, from everything that "the newspaper offers," the assessment of which is, after all, not the philosopher's concern.

An ideological analysis must therefore also abstract, with regard to Hitler's book itself, from the aforementioned purposeful nature of this work, which is not merely "a book about National Socialism," but rather constitutes a political act by the Führer, directed "hic et nunc"[4] at very specific people.

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[1] *Mein Kampf*; we quote from the single-volume edition, Munich 1930
[2] Plato: *"Anyone, then, who leaves behind an art in writing, and also anyone who accepts it in the belief that something clear and certain can be conveyed through letters, is naive enough to believe that written speeches are anything other than a reminder for those who already know what they are written about."* - *Phaedrus*, pg. 275
[3] Johann v. Leers, *Hitler*, 1932. pgs. 44, 69f
[4] Latin for "here and now". - The Translator

We recall the countless psychological observations scattered throughout the book (here especially in pgs. 193ff., 375ff., 418f., 508f., 650), which reveal the clear insights into psychological realities that guide the movement's Führer: undoubtedly, this is also one of the reasons for his resounding success.
As is well known, according to Plato's teaching:

"...the knowledge of the natural dispositions and character of human souls is one of the most useful requirements for that art whose task it is to cultivate them, namely, the art of statecraft."

It is therefore not our place to discuss this matter either, as it would also be premature from an objective standpoint.

Setting all this aside, however, there are undoubtedly ideological connections through which Hitler's book seeks to legitimize National Socialism in the eyes of thinking and morally responsible people, for Hitler, too, speaks incessantly of a National Socialist "worldview," and does so with great determination (cf., e.g., the purely violent and ideological struggle against Marxism, pgs. 186. 187 188).
He expressly emphasizes the value of the "idea":

"The lack of a great, transformative idea has always meant a limitation on fighting power; the conviction that it is right to use even the most brutal weapons is always tied to the existence of a fanatical belief in the necessity of a revolutionary new order on this earth."

- Pg. 596f

He wants to "build a new state" (pg. 554); his goal lies not "in a mechanical restoration of the past, but in the endeavor to establish an organic, national state in place of today's absurd state mechanism" (pg. 598): these are goals that, so to speak, demand intellectual engagement.
In this context, it is also stated:

"From the very first day, the young movement took the position that its idea must be defended intellectually... "

- Pg. 598

Thus, a theoretical debate seems to be called for both by the movement's own claims to absoluteness and by the explicit intention of its Führer.[5]

Such a debate will likely be all the more fruitful the more fundamental it is, and the more it takes into account, from the outset, the intellectual structure of the National Socialist movement.

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[5] Joh. Danziger has provided an excellent overview in his book "Der Nationalsozialismus im Rahmen des deutschen Geisteslebens" (*National Socialism within the Context of German Intellectual Life*), Gelbe Hefte, 1931: here, he quotes a statement by Mussolini regarding the return of life to the individual and the "classical reconnection" to the leadership of the few and the chosen.
On this point, he remarks: "*A review of Plato's The Republic would undoubtedly reveal much that is kindred in spirit.*" (pg. 100)

If, as we intend, we take the Platonic way of viewing these matters as our point of reference, we thereby measure the new movement—in accordance with its own claims—not against some academic standard, but gain as a discussion partner the creator of the quintessentially Western intellectual movement and historical interpretation, from which the Christian classics also drew nourishment, and into which they themselves creatively intervened, and which has remained clearly alive in the German movement since Winckelmann.
Furthermore, Plato in particular—how else could he be the great, eternally youthful role model?—is as free from dogma as Hitler could possibly wish, as the revolutionary force of the Greek statesman, the action-born and action-generating spirit of his work, fortunately thwarts any historical "comparison" in the shallow sense.
However, by no means does the examination of structures—the internal forms of construction, here and there—seem fruitless to us; this examination can be conducted without disregarding or detracting from the specific material content.
Meanwhile, the reference to Platonic terms in the following passage (highlighted in print) from a National Socialist pamphlet[6] is noteworthy and, as will become apparent, not without its own internal justification:

"The will to form, the will to untangle chaos, to restore order to a world that has fallen apart, and to act as the guardian (in the highest Platonic sense) of order—that is the immense task that National Socialism has set for itself."

II.

We begin with a brief overview of Plato's political movement.[7]

Viewed schematically, there were two tendencies in Athenian governance during the 5th century: one sought to preserve the status quo, and the other looked to the future.
The first clung to the idea of the polis, while the second advocated the concept of a federation; the first does not abandon the principle of political self-sufficiency, while the second pursues a maritime policy; the first is traditional, aristocratic, and Spartan-friendly—Doric in character—while the second is modern, democratic, and Ionian in character.
The first sees the Persian Wars as a symbol of the polis's liberation, holding the land battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, and Plataea in higher esteem than those of Salamis and Artemision, while the tradition goes from Themistocles—the builder of the Attic fleet and the Port of Piraeus, the victor at Salamis, and the founder of the Attic Naval League—to Ephialtes and to Pericles, whose policies, as is well known, drove Athens into the Thirty Years' War with Sparta, during the first phase of which the plague claimed him, yet was still Athens' greatest statesman.

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[6] Gottfried Feder, "Das Programm der NSDAP" (*The Program of the NSDAP*), etc., 51st–55th ed., 1931, pg. 26
[7] We may refrain from providing specific references at this point, since we present our view in detail in our book "Platon, Die Philosophie des heroischen Vorbildes" (*Plato: The Philosophy of the Heroic Model*), to be published by Felix Meiner, for which the third section of this sketch was originally written as an appendix.

Two years later (in 427), Plato was born: during his youth, Athens collapsed amid factional strife and internal Greek discord, and while whether he himself served as a soldier abroad can no longer be determined officially, it is very likely.
What is certain, however, and as he himself recounts, is that as a young man he was actively involved in practical politics; at the age of twenty, however, he joined Socrates, whom he later has say in the *Gorgias*:

"I believe that I, along with a few other Athenians—lest I say all by myself—are the only ones today who devote themselves to the true art of statecraft and manage the affairs of state."

What Socrates seeks as a politician is not to be misunderstood: he participates in public life only out of necessity, shuns any illegality, and never speaks before the masses - as he says to defend himself:

"For know this, Athenians: if I had undertaken to manage public affairs long ago, I would have perished long ago, and would have been of no use to you or to myself."

Having fought his way through this apolitical stance to a life of personal and educational influence, he drank the cup of poison with the consciousness of a victor, knowing that others would now follow in his footsteps; he had gathered friends around him, and in this fellowship—where the vine of beautiful and good humanity flourished—he believed he had created the seed of a new state, for he saw through the boundless superficiality and boastful grandstanding of the contemporary bourgeoisie, along with that of their "leaders," who—like the worst man of the masses, serving their own self-interest—proved their political incompetence.
Socrates denounced their conduct by teaching that all this was unworthy of a "free man," and, by exchanging external power for power over souls through his exemplary life, he believed himself to be the decisive political force authorized by the Delphic god: as proof of his altruistic disposition, he pointed to his own poverty.
The only conceivable source of renewal and order in life and thought appeared to him to be something long forgotten: moral, ideal courage and energy.
He is said to have quoted a line from Hesiod[8], which malicious interpreters held against him:

"No deed is a disgrace; only idleness is a disgrace."

"Socrates had the thoughts; Plato wrote them down," says an old man - this has two meanings: first, the rigorous, philosophical foundation and the dialectical formulation of Socratic ethics, and second, the essential, inextricable connection between Plato's work and its living source—the personality of Socrates.

Plato took on the task of preparing, through the serious education of a small circle, an elite of political leaders who, by virtue of their moral superiority, would be capable of assuming the leadership of the state at whatever hour fate might grant - as he says:

"...it is in the nature of things that profound insight and great power are united; both strive mutually toward one another, seek each other out, and unite."

[8] Hesiod, *Works and Days,* pg. 311; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, pgs. 2. 56, 57

The education of this Platonic circle of friends was by no means "scientific" in the modern sense, for its efforts were directed toward fostering the moral, active personality as the seed of society.
Socrates served as the model—he who had exemplified and died for the new way of life, and whose figure Plato mythologized in his writings; he is the secret center of life and meaning in the entire Platonic oeuvre, and his—equally profoundly personal—achievement lies in this metaphysical hypostatization of the realm of ideas, accessible only through personal experience and one's own moral self-creation.
But that enthusiastic pathos of Platonic philosophy was not blind; rather, it unfolded essentially amid constant self-reflection and rigorous intellectual discipline, for while Plato is not "objective" in the sense of lacking personal involvement, he is certainly no less a subjective dreamer.

In the face of fundamental doubt regarding all traditional foundations of the whole, he undertakes to loosen the rigidly entrenched political and cultural civic dogma in the spirit of the image of Socrates, and then to examine, judge, and recreate it.
The foundation of this edifice is evident in the phenomenon of Socrates' revolutionary apoliticism, which Plato's circle also faithfully adopts[9]; it also signifies the same thing that has been understood in German philosophy since Kant and Fichte under the concept of freedom.[10]
Plato describes it in the definition of the soul's essence as self-movement[11], and in the ethical interpretation of this concept as self-activity[12], which is rooted in self-knowledge; then in contrast stands "polypragmonia" and "polylogy"—that is, a lack of means, a lack of ideas, and a fragmenting, narrow-minded preoccupation with concrete matters in action and thought.
Through the strict ontological distinction between the soul and the body—in which, just as in the chorismos of ideas from the world of experience, the primordial phenomenon of Socratic -Platonic separation—the immanent and transcendent boundary concept of the new worldview is established, whose functional, dynamic interrelation—the erotic relationship of humanity to the cosmos—constitutes the moving and formative principle of the new ethics.

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[9] Akademos means both "far from the city" and "savior of the people."
[10] Since what matters to us is the living idea, we refer to Fichte's harmonious expositions in "Reben an die deutsche Nation" (*Addresses to the German Nation*), 1807, published by Reclam—only briefly, however, as we assume every thinking German has this book at hand.
1. "Creation of an entirely new order of things", pgs. 12, 32, 48; the dawn of a "new world", pgs. 4, 20.
2. Against "sluggishness and behavior lacking in dignity" among those in power, termed "humanity, liberality, and popularity", pgs. 70f, 72 (65f.).
Rejection of civic fear and hope regarding daily life as a political motive, pgs. 73, 134ff.
Against false, mechanical, non-holistic, superficial, and passive education, pgs. 12. 28ff. 50f. 154f.
Against the skeptical and cautious elders (regarding youth), pg. 242ff.
3. The new education: help comes only from within (pg. 7), rising above inertia and cowardice (pgs. 6, 8). Core: Self-initiative (pg. 27), etc.
Education of the whole person, pgs. 43f, 46; Role model, pgs. 25f, 33f, 74, 170, 171; education that intervenes in life, pgs. 71, 73ff. Goal: Self-formation into an eye for the whole (pg. 14); especially Speeches 4 and 5, where national character is identified with the ideas of self-education and freedom.
4. National Foundation, esp. 7th Speech.
Concept of Freedom, pg. 115ff.
Against a mechanical conception of the state, pgs. 108ff. 140f. 142.
5. Religious foundation of national consciousness, pg. 125ff; the state is merely a means to the end of "the flourishing of the eternal and divine in the world", pgs. 131ff, 140
[11] *Phaedrus*, pg. 245 and *Laws*, X, pg. 894
[12] Doing one's duty = justice; particularly well known in the *Republic*.

From a psychological perspective, this manifests as manliness, courage, and a spirit of inquiry—a steadfast and true journey toward an infinitely distant goal.

In the *Politeia*, the sociological consequences of this ethics of personality are then drawn, that is, the basic features of civic education are outlined.
As a condition (not as an origin!) of genuine education, eugenic discussions also have their necessary place here[13], for just as the cosmos, the world, as a whole consists of nothing but wholes, so too does the state consist of nothing but living members.
Plato himself states that with this model of the state—measured against his idea of Socrates—he sets forth an infinitely sublime goal toward which real life can nevertheless (and precisely for that reason only approximately) strive and fall short:

"For the sake of the model, then, we sought justice in itself—what it truly is—and the perfectly just man, as far as such a one might exist, and what he would be like if he did exist; likewise, we sought injustice and the unjust man, so that, by looking at them as they appeared to us in terms of happiness and its opposite, we would be compelled to admit of our own accord that whoever is most like them will also have the fate most like theirs—not, however, in order to demonstrate that this actually occurs."[14]

A materialistic and therefore necessarily shallow perspective calls such a construct a "utopia", but nothing was further from Plato's mind than the futuristic dream of a golden age, for even to him the old saying of Bias[15] had become all too bitter a lesson from experience:

"The masses are cowardly."

He was over 60 years old when the hour for public action seemed to have arrived; his beloved student Dion was on the verge of seizing public power in Sicily, and despite an earlier journey that had ended in failure and, moreover, had taken a turn that was personally threatening to Plato, the elderly man dared to

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[13] Ibid., *Republic,* V, pg. 459ff; Laws, VI, pg. 773ff. Cf. the book by H.F.K. Günther, "Plato als Hüter des Lebens" (*Plato as a Guardian of Life*), 1928
It must be noted here that Plato's solution to the body-soul problem does not at all recognize or permit a crude, chemical conception of the physical; rather, psycho-biological views are likely to be decisive here as well - see, for example, the judgment on the Eastern trading peoples in *The Republic*, pg. 436, along with the passage on the spirit of commerce in *Laws*, IV, beginning.
Pericles had reinstated an ancient law regarding the influx of foreigners into Athens, according to which only those who were native-born (of Attica!) on both the paternal and maternal sides (!) enjoyed full citizenship.
In 445/44, a year of famine and a gift of grain arriving from Egypt prompted the people to support the enforcement of this law, which had previously met with resistance - thus, about one-third of those claiming citizenship (approximately 4,760 people) were excluded.
"Many of them were forced to leave the country! Others remained as protected relatives; still others, who had taken legal action against their exclusion, were sold into slavery if they lost their case."
Fifteen years later (during the plague), the law became impractical and was violated and subsequently repealed by Pericles himself, thereby allowing the old abuses to resume - see Plutarch, *Pericles* and Ernst Curtius, *The History of Greece*, 1879 (5th ed.), Vol. II, pgs. 266ff., 417, 427
Plato's contribution to this question seeks here, as everywhere else, to move beyond such politically expedient actions and to theoretically develop a just and intrinsically sustainable standpoint.
[14] Cf. Hitler's thoroughly apt account of the various tasks of the programmatist and the politician, pg. 229ff
[15] In Hermann Diels, "Fragmente d. Vorsokratiker" (*Fragments of the Presocratics*), 4th ed, 1922. II, pg. 216

undertake the arduous journey to Southern Italy twice in succession (366 and 361)—the second time to cover for his friend, who had been banished from the country but had by no means abandoned his plans. Dion fell by the hand of an assassin just as he "had already reached the point of overcoming his enemies"; Plato's lamentations over this blow of fate are deeply moving to read in the *Seventh Letter*[16], in which his unyielding will is also expressed - it is addressed to Dion's companions:

"But now some demon or wicked man has intervened—lawless and godless, and, worst of all, with the audacity of folly, in which all evil takes root and sprouts for everyone and will in the future bear the bitterest fruit for those who sow it—and has overturned and destroyed it all for the second time. Let us now remain silent as a good omen for the third time; nevertheless, I advise you, his friends, to emulate Dion in his love of country and his prudent way of life, and to try, under more favorable stars, to realize his intention…"

So wrote the seventy-four-year-old Plato.
At the same time, he also composed his most extensive political work, the *Laws*, after the completion of which Death gently carried him away.

Plato's philosophy has overcome within itself the stark contradictions in Athenian politics described in the preceding section: he is conservative, but for the sake of reform, a revolutionary in the strongest sense; he is a philosopher of the polis, but his ethically grounded realm transcends the boundaries of Attica and even of Greece itself[17]; he fights against maritime policy, which, in his opinion, "fills the citizens with a commercial spirit and a peddler's greed"[18] and burdens the city with "ports, shipyards, walls, customs duties, and such farces"[19], while also directing his sharpest invectives against the rule of the masses and ceaselessly points to the Doric ideal, yet on the other hand, he advocates, in opposition to Sparta, for a liberal, organically vibrant constitution.

Also typical is this unification, achieved in the form of Platonic philosophy, between Socrates—who, as the son of a sculptor, emerged from the common people—and Plato, the aristocrat by birth.
The deepest mystery of this dual unity lies in the fact—and this is Plato's fundamental discovery—that the inactive, unfree person is just as unfit for society as the unbound person who has escaped the binding whole: these two modes of action are necessarily identical, as are their two positive opposites—freedom and connection to the Ideas—and they are vividly embodied in the heroic, educational figure of Socrates and in the one in whom the Eros of the Whole has burst forth and is active.

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[16] The authenticity of the document is no longer disputed today - see Heinrich Gomperz, "Platons Selbstbiographie" (*Plato's Autobiography*), published by de Gruyter, 1928

[17] There is a curiously Hellenistic historical note in Gellius (Noct. Att. XVII, pgs. 21, 28–30): about four hundred years after the founding of the city, Philip, son of Amynta and father of Alexander, ascended to the throne of Macedonia; Alexander was born at that time, and a few years later the philosopher Plato set out for Sicily to study under Dionysius, the later tyrant of Sicily; then, some time later, Philip defeated the Athenians in a great battle at Chaeronea.

[18] *The Laws*, IV, beginning: there, too, is the rejection of the significance of Salamis and Artemisium.
The contrast between the noble man who lives by virtue—who represents the norm—and the merchant who "scrapes together" despicable profits ("heroic virtues" and "petty egoism," Hitler, pg. 166; cf. 172) is, incidentally, ancient in the Western world; see, for example, *The Odyssey,* VIII, pg. 159ff

[19] *Gorgias*, pg. 519; see Fichte, op. cit., pg. 218ff; Hitler, for example, pgs. 154, 742

III.

Quite apart from the unmistakable distinctiveness of every creative process in its own time, one cannot compare a political practitioner as such with a political thinker; however, one can, should assume and seek out a context of meaning behind every genuine political act, and we will make use of this freedom in what follows.
The quotations, which make no claim to completeness, serve more as a reminder and are intended to establish a certain likelihood that the ideological context we have in mind—which lies at the root of the National Socialist movement—truly exists and thrives, or could exist and thrive.
We distinguish the following ideas, which are, of course, not separate from one another, but intrinsically interwoven.

1. The movement begins with revolutionary apoliticism; it questions and attacks the validity of all other political methods, not in the way one party questions another, *secundum quid*[20], but absolutely and radically.
National Socialism—and this has been emphasized from the very beginning—is not a bourgeois party (representing an interest group in parliament), but rather a "new worldview," a political movement that strives toward comprehensive, initially quite intangible in their details, but in any case ideal goals that transcend economic and other interests, toward goals that are sublime at their core (cf. the critique of Schönerer's "Pan-Germans" on pgs. 114f., 190f., 242, 243, 409, etc.).
Self-interest, which tears everything apart into individual interests, is countered by a radical spirit of sacrifice (cf. the contrast between idealism and egoism on pg. 327), for "half-measures in everything and everyone" lead nowhere:

"No one had the courage anymore to apply thorough, radical measures; instead, here as everywhere else, people fumbled about with nothing but half-baked solutions…"

- Pg. 266

This is elaborated at length with reference to the liberal press, and is followed—in line with the central idea—by a detailed critique of half-measures in the treatment of the marriage problem (pg. 269ff.), politics (pg. 297ff.), etc. - Hitler thus does not seek the "preservation of the status quo," nor does he seek to "artificially… refine existing evils," but rather wishes:

"...to ensure healthier paths for future development from the very beginning..."

- Pg. 29

2. Where this total skepticism and challenge becomes tangible, it stems not from the "economic catastrophe" but from ethical abuses (pg. 247ff.).
Criticism of intellectual attitudes begins with an attack on Marxism (pgs. 40, 41, etc.) and Judaism (pg. 61ff.); it arises from observations of "ailments… in almost all areas of art and culture" (pg. 284), a

[20] Latin for "in a certain respect". - The Translator

complete impotence of artistic and general cultural creativity (in the prewar period) (pg. 287), the "sinister signs of aging in the whole" (pg. 74), and finally, a flawed educational system (pgs. 258ff., 262, 276ff., 451ff., among others).
Such observations—which began in Vienna—are, incidentally, not limited to Germany, which, on the contrary, is at an advantage due to its form of government, military, and civil service (pg. 302ff.).

3. The intellectual causes of this sterility—we are considering here solely the intellectual structure, and are therefore setting aside the social ills that were very important to Hitler (e.g., pgs. 30–35), which are, of course, themselves caused by or permitted by that intellectual illness and weakness ("thoughtlessness", pg. 28ff.)—lie in the liberal, self-restrictive attitude toward life, a general "inner rot, cowardice, lack of character—in short, unworthiness" (pg. 250) of the bourgeois world.
The "lack of energy among the bourgeoisie" (namely, in the face of all that is ideal and courageous), which, as something rigid, sleepy, ossified, and narrow-minded, is justly subject to ridicule (e.g., pg. 451), but particularly striking to us is the rejection of the bourgeois view that culture is a kind of luxury item rather than an expression of active and necessary intellectual stimulation—as if, for example, patriotism were merely an external, uplifting appendage to a form of national action that lacks deep roots and a spirit of sacrifice, etc.
To illustrate this protest[21]:

"No admission for young people! Consider that such precautionary measures had to be taken at venues that should, first and foremost, be dedicated to the education of youth (!), and should not serve to amuse (!) older, jaded social classes.
What would the great dramatists of all time have said about such a measure, and above all, about the circumstances that gave rise to it (!)? How Schiller would have flared up, how Goethe would have turned away in outrage! But of course, what are Schiller, Goethe, or Shakespeare compared to the heroes of modern German poetry?
Old, worn-out, and obsolete—no, overcome phenomena, for that was the defining characteristic of this era: not only did it produce nothing but filth itself, but it also defiled everything truly great from the past."

- Pg. 284f

The passage cited here (pg. 285ff.) simultaneously and with the utmost decisiveness advocates for the organic connection between the new movement and the great past: using the example of that "era of the most shameful inferiority," which nevertheless "fancied itself capable of overcoming" a great past, Hitler makes it abundantly clear that only movements that are themselves inherently weak would attempt to bring about an absolute break with tradition.

"The meaning and purpose of revolutions is not to tear down the entire edifice [of human culture], but to remove what is poorly constructed or unsuitable, and to continue building upon the healthy foundation that is then laid bare before us."[22]

[21] The exclamation points we have added here and further on in parentheses refer to Platonic sources.
[22] The comparison of cultural ills to pathological growths that must be eradicated in order to restore the organism to a healthy state is very common in Hitler's writings - we note a few page numbers as evidence: 29, 30, 284.

4. Consequently, the core of the new worldview is a renaissance of the attitude toward life, more specifically, of self-initiative: the "hollowness of a comfortable life" (pg. 20), like everything external and mechanical, is rejected in favor of activity—namely, personal and vibrant activity.
Consequently, in contrast to the general "dominance of the intellect," the concept of personal moral responsibility gains new esteem, the ideal of which is the "Führer" (i.e., one who is not appointed by an impersonal apparatus to issue commands, but who is called and rules by virtue of his own capacity for responsibility); from this, the postulate of the organic state follows naturally.
Every state mechanism—or, as has been said, "the structure of society built from the larger circle outward"[23]—necessarily dissolves the moral significance of any distinctiveness and originality[24], and since the intellectualized bourgeoisie—whose representatives have constantly discredited themselves in the eyes of the people as a whole—no longer demonstrates that open, healthy spirit and that radical willingness to commit that every ideal following presupposes, but rather seeks to maintain its economic position in peace and order, the consequence follows that this fundamental aristocratic idea—precisely because it is radical, i.e., a genuine idea, must be implanted in the masses (weakness of Schönerer's position, pgs. 108, 110, 111, 117f., etc.)[25]

5. We bring the above to life by drawing on passages from Hitler's book.

In substance:

"...the highest purpose of the people's state is the preservation of those primordial racial elements which, as the source of culture, creates the beauty and dignity (!) of a higher humanity (!): we, as Aryans, can

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As is well known, this motif plays a major role in the Platonic account; cf., e.g., The Republic, II, pg. 372.
[23] Kurt Ziesché, "Das Königtum Christi in Europa" (*The Kingdom of Christ in Europe*), Regensburg 1926: this book is of fundamental importance to us for understanding the Christian significance of this issue.
[24] If we may draw a conclusion: the concept of freedom present in the National Socialist freedom movement applies, at first, to the German nation - compare Fichte's *Seventh Address* with the function of the Aryan idea in National Socialism, in which, in our view, we find a very similar—though even more clearly boundary-transcending—symbolization of the concept of freedom that ethically expands the idea of the fatherland. Organic thinking, once it has found a focal point, thus draws ever-widening ideal circles, and in this sense, National Socialism is not merely a national-German, but a national-European movement which, in our view, must—by its own internal logic—reclaim not only the idea of a united Germany but, beyond that, that of a European Reich: this Reich, however, is neither a phantom of equilibrium, nor a universal monarchy, as Fichte criticizes it in the aforementioned work, but rather signifies the highest fulfillment and guarantee of national characteristics and rights, the violation of which—as contrary to its innermost principle of construction—it cannot calmly tolerate anywhere, and certainly not in any way within itself.
[25] It is clear that such an immense task could not have entered the field of vision of the ancient politician at all: herein lies, for our sensibility, a truly decisive novelty.
Hitler's apoliticism benefits the masses - for example, the critique of the written word (pg. 526, using the same argument as Plato, *Phaedrus*, pg. 275 DE) is made in favor of oratory for the masses, which is entirely foreign to the Socratic circle in this sense.
At most, one might perceive Socrates' emphatically folksy style of expression—which has been repeatedly criticized by his opponents—as being of a similar orientation, as it likewise seeks to adapt to a mode of understanding that is not intellectually corrupted; furthermore, the pathos-laden rhetorical structure of certain Platonic works, which, as the *Menexenus* demonstrates (Eir. orat. 40, 151), have likewise broken through the narrow academic circle of listeners.

therefore conceive of a state only as the living organism (!) of a people, which not only ensures the preservation of this people but also leads it to the highest freedom (!) through the further development of its intellectual and ideal capacities (!).”

- Pg. 434

First of all, then, the purpose of the National Socialist state is not an immanent one - Hitler expresses this sharply:

“The fundamental insight is… that the state represents not an end, but a means.”

- Pg. 431

“It is not the state in and of itself that achieves a certain cultural height, but it can only preserve the race that makes this possible.”

- Pg. 432

“Human rights violate state law.”

- Pg. 105

“The state is a means to an end.”

- Pg. 433

“...[the state] does not represent a content, but a form.”

- Pg. 43b

Hitler evidently arrives at this (not necessarily Platonic) skepticism toward the state in and of itself through his critique of the “formal mechanism” of the modern state (cf. pg. 432).
Western democracy as well (which Hitler contrasts with a “true Germanic democracy,” pgs. 95, 99), although born of the spirit of liberalism and individualism, is indeed still a form of government, and only a false concept of individualism has supplanted the genuine concept of society - thus, the state therefore no longer lives “from the smaller circle outward,” but has “become rigid.”
In contrast, we see in Hitler the social principle at work in its full, original power—first in the concept of the organism and then in the dominant idea of the nation.

We reproduce here a passage that may illustrate the characteristic fusion of these two motifs and the lively impulsiveness with which they strive to take effect:

“...In order for this national sentiment to be genuine from the very beginning (!) and not merely consist of hollow pretense (!), an ironclad principle must be hammered into the still malleable minds of the youth (!)

[the following is italicized in the original]: ***whoever loves his people proves it solely through the sacrifices (!) he is willing to make for them.***

There is no such thing as a sense of national identity that is motivated solely by profit, nor is there such a thing as nationalism that encompasses only certain classes: shouts of 'Hurrah!' prove nothing and confer no right to call oneself a nationalist if they are not backed by a deep, loving concern for the preservation of a universal, healthy national character.

A reason to be proud of one's people exists only when one no longer needs to be ashamed of one's social class, for a people in which half is miserable, emaciated, or even degenerate presents such a poor image that no one should feel pride in it[26]*: only when a national character is healthy in all its members—in body and soul—can the joy of belonging to it rightly rise in everyone to that lofty feeling we call national pride, and this highest form of pride will be felt only by those who truly know the greatness of their nation.*

The intimate union of nationalism and a sense of social justice (!) must be instilled in young hearts from the very beginning (!); then, one day, a nation of citizens will arise, united and forged together by a shared love and a shared pride (!), unshakable and invincible forever.

Our era's fear of chauvinism is a sign of its impotence, since it not only lacks any overflowing energy, but even finds it distasteful - thus, it is no longer destined by fate for any great deed, for the great upheavals on this Earth would have been inconceivable if their driving force had been, instead of fanatical, even hysterical passion, merely the bourgeois virtues of calm and order."

- Pg. 474f

With the "rejection of the democratic mass mentality," and by virtue of a holistic, organic perspective, attention is necessarily directed here as well to the original constructive power of the individual: the necessity of this principle, clearly recognized by Hitler (see the beginning of his critique of parliamentarism, pg. 85, below), rests, as already indicated, on the fact that a society, as an anonymous mass, is not responsible—that is, it has no morally active existence whatsoever.

Hitler calls this central idea of his entire worldview—which stands in stark contrast to the Marxist view—"the aristocratic principle of nature" (pg. 69; "the aristocratic fundamental idea of nature," pgs. 87, 427)[27]; the new worldview, it is stated (pg. 493), is based "not on the idea of the majority, but on that of the individual":

"It is not the masses who invent, nor the majority who organizes or thinks, but in everything, always and only the individual human being, the person."

- Pg. 446

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[26] *"...that these [external notions of honor and national glory] are empty illusions, and that no wound and no mutilation of the individual is healed by the glory of the entire nation, we might well, unless a higher view of life is brought to us, become dangerous preachers of this very understandable... doctrine, which possesses a certain appeal."* - Fichte, op. cit., pg. 18. (Note added by us.)

[27] Compare, with regard to Plato's concept of physis and the cosmos, nature as the "queen of all wisdom", pg. 144; "humanity of nature", pg. 145; "the eternal principles of this ultimate wisdom", pg. 267, and "the order that shapes and forms the entire universe", pg. 328.

"The state must have in it anchored the principle of personality in its organization, starting with the smallest cell of the municipality and leading all the way up to the highest leadership of the entire Reich."

- **Pg. 501**

"'Authority for every leader downward and accountability upward': in this form, the idea of rule and service becomes the principle underlying the structure of our entire constitution."

- **Pg. 501**

Thus, the famous fundamental postulate of Plato's Republic—regal rule by the best and wisest—is logically reformulated in Hitler's conception of the state:

"The best constitution and form of government is the one that, with the most natural certainty (!), brings the best minds (!) of the national community to positions of leadership (!) and guiding influence (!)."

- **Pg. 500, emphasized in the original.**

From this point, Hitler arrives at statements such as:

"World history is made by minorities."

- **Pg. 447**

Along with fundamental organizational insights into the value of a limited selection of leaders (657ff.):

"The notion that the combination of weak groups must result in a force to be reckoned with is incorrect, since experience shows that the majority, in any form and under all circumstances, will be the embodiment of stupidity and cowardice...(!)"

- **Pg. 577; cf. pg. 89**

"Great, truly world-changing revolutions are conceivable and realizable only as titanic struggles between individual entities..."

- **Pg. 578; the first stirring protest of the idea of leadership against mass mentality appears on pgs. 85–99**

As the movement's organizer, Hitler distinguishes between followers and members:

"Followership is rooted solely in (passive) recognition; membership in the courage to represent (!) what has been recognized and to spread it further.
Recognition in its passive form corresponds to the majority of humanity, which is sluggish and cowardly; membership requires an activist mindset, and thus corresponds only to a minority of people."

Membership and following stand in a fixed, organic-legal relationship: the activist core of a movement, comprising the best and most capable, must permeate the whole organizationally, but its effectiveness depends on its remaining small, agile, and unified.
If the organization were to become dominated by the majority, "the inferior would eventually gain the upper hand over the fighters"; the movement would "be dragged down to the level of its own meager heroism, and it would do nothing to bring about the victory of the original idea." (pg. 656).
This context also includes Hitler's rejection of Western-democratic parliamentarism, where "even those who understand nothing of the matter and workers of other kinds should be free to express their opinions" (Plato)—that is, where the expert is considered just as valid as the layperson, and which is not a "gathering of sages" (pg. 98)—is also part of this context.
Every specialist is fully responsible for his or her actions: the application of this principle extends, in principle, from the party leadership down to the individual party organizations (cf. pg. 378f.).

6. From this organic perspective, which seeks to view everything as animated from within, made whole and is shaped, and which consequently cannot recognize anything external as merely external, but rather senses behind everything a unifying, healing, and sacred force, the educational ideal that emerges is the exaltation and sanctification of the entire spatiotemporal world, its liberation from all deforming, disfiguring materialistic and purely logical habits of thought.
Therefore, the body is not simply opposed to the spirit, but is its instrument and visible representative - thus, in his plan for artistic and physical education, Hitler explicitly draws on the "Greek ideal of beauty" (pg. 453, cf. pg. 276)[28]; the well-known eugenic aspirations of his movement also belong here.

The mind itself is not "composed" of multiple faculties, nor does intellectual education consist in the development of individual skills or knowledge; rather, it consists in a comprehensive moral self-affirmation of the human being that transcends even gender differences (which Hitler calls "the development of character, especially the cultivation of will and decisiveness, combined with education in a sense of responsibility", pg. 452).
According to this view, education always has an ideal, not a real, value; hence the strength of humanistic education over scientific education, pg. 469f.; on the education of girls analogous to that of boys, see pg. 459f.
Such a moral and creative education goes beyond abstract didactic instruction, and is essentially guided by personal example—that is, originally, "the direct and personal transmission of ideas" (pg. 384 above).[29]

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[28] Since Hitler prioritizes physical education over intellectual education (cf. pg. 452), no one will overlook what Plato adds—recalling a very similar (because naturally dictated) sequence in *The Republic*, pg. 410 C—namely, that an ideal standard underlies this education, thereby preserving the true hierarchy of values that places the soul before the body.
[29] The famous passage from Plato in the *Seventh Letter*, 341 C: *"There is nothing written by me on this subject, for it cannot be expressed at all like other subjects of instruction, but through frequent association for the sake of the matter (Pragma) and through living together: in this, a light is kindled in an instant as if by a leaping fire, and, once generated in the soul, it then nourishes itself."*

Likewise, society continues to be internally enlivened and united by the national idea, for all self-serving interest groups directly destroy the nation, and conversely, all rationalism that does not originally seek the health of the whole and promote it to the best of its ability is an empty phrase (cf. the quote cited above on pg. 46).

Finally, the national spirit itself is the image of a Higher Power, which is imperfectly reflected in it, and whose service—as the supreme ruler of the age—constitutes the ultimate source of all compulsion toward the ideal realm.[30]
Thus the chain holds: nothing physical without the spirit, nothing spiritual without the collective spirit, nothing of the collective spirit without the Supreme Spirit; rather, the body is and ought to be the creation and image of the spirit; the spirit is and ought to be the creation and image of the nation, and the nation is and ought to be the creation and image of the Eternal.

7. With this gaze upward and this departure toward the Idea, we conclude the circle of our sketch here:

"We National Socialists, as champions of a new worldview, must never stand on that famous 'ground' of—and, moreover, false—'facts', for in that case, we would no longer be the champions of a new, great idea, but the foot soldiers of today's lie."

- Pg. 434

It is "necessary to counter the number-crunchers of the current 'real' republic with faith in an ideal realm" (pg. 487).

Hitler vigorously opposes the delusion that the economy is a force capable of forming or sustaining a state (pg. 764ff.); "Not material qualities, but ideal virtues above all" enable the formation of a state (pg. 767), and material interests thrive best "in the shadow of heroic virtues" (ibid.).

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[30] Once again: the swastika and the Aryan idea ultimately signify nothing naturalistic—one should not equate them with the racial preservationist and eugenic perspectives, which, while they themselves play a very important, but even in their most serious sense can play no more than a conditional, administrative role—should not be equated with the movement's ideal, its ideological center, which is symbolically linked to the national spirit precisely within this concept.
In this sense, the swastika and Aryanism can only represent the ideal of a noble humanity living in the spirit of freedom, one that is hostile to self-interest and the spirit of usury wherever it may be found, *"as opposed to the ridiculous slogan of ensuring peace and order to peacefully enable mutual swindling"* (pg. 439; cf. the quotation on the purpose of the ethnic state, above pg. 45, and e.g., pg. 335ff.), and which embraces precisely this active spirit of freedom as its national mission, as the *"goal predestined by Providence"* (pgs. 164, 234) of the national state, as the *"highest image of the Lord"* (pgs. 196, 421) to be embodied in it, while excluding everything that is unfree, servile, and clinging to filthy profit as uninvolved in the national cause, as un-German and foreign. (See Fichte's *Seventh Address* on this point.)

But if one fails to look beyond the symbol to his will to act and his creative seriousness, one misses the point that really matters - thus, for example, in the struggle against the symbolic representative of self-serving and unpatriotic attitudes—who, of course, can only be its symbolic representative because he has, in fact, made himself suspect in the history of Marxism and liberalism in the most intrusive manner as a truly real representative, while he by no means always needs to be so and, in fact, is not — the nearest and most insidious enemy, namely a reprehensible and unjust egoism within ourselves, may continue to thrive under the guise of grandstanding: *"The essential must never be sought in the outward form, but always only in the inner meaning,"* says Hitler (pg. 512).

Regarding the individual's capacity for and willingness to make sacrifices for the collective—the forces that, in truth, build the state—it is stated:

"That these virtues have not the slightest connection with the economy is evident from the simple realization that people never sacrifice themselves for the economy; that is to say, one does not die for business, but only for ideals."

- Pg. 168ff

That is why the National Socialist battle cry is "For freedom", and only secondarily "for bread" (cf. pg. 768).
This heroic-utopian undertaking is embarked upon with clear awareness:

"The apparent futility of our tremendous struggle is the very foundation of the greatness of our task, and also of the possibility of success."

- Pg. 441

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The substantive demands that such a perspective places on science, and above all to philosophy, concerns the clarification of fundamental concepts and, subsequently, the creation of new educational symbols, so that humanity—entangled in the problems of modern conditions and internally fragmented—may find its way back to itself through them, and seal and bear witness to this through progress in the harmonious mastery of our planet: all historical scholarship has the lofty task of breaking free from a mere naturalistic retrospection to embrace a vibrant, forward-looking perspective, and to serve action, not merely the bookshelves.
With regard to something new and original—whose creation the historical moment demands—the favorable constellation of the great ancient celestial bodies truly means very little - here, too, we find reassurance in Fichte, who says of the German thinker[31]:

"Golden ages, in every respect, are to him a limitation of the dead past: gold may indeed be the noblest thing in the bosom of the dead earth, he says, but the substance of the living spirit lies beyond the sun and beyond all suns, and is their source.
For him, history—and with it the human race—does not unfold according to the hidden and wondrous law of a circle dance, but rather, according to him, the true and right human being shapes it himself, not merely repeating what has already been, but creating something entirely new within time; he therefore never expects mere repetition, and, should it nevertheless occur—word for word, as it stands in the ancient book—he at least does not admire it."

This constellation also signifies nothing less than: assurance of a sound course.

[31] Ibid., pg. 114